



# Couriers and Messengers

## Table of Contents *(scroll or use links below to navigate document)*

**Job Overview**

**Typical Tasks**

**Skills, Knowledge, and Abilities**

**Work Environment**

**Job Outlook and Wages**

**Trends**

**Training**

**Where Do I Find the Job?**

**Where Can the Job Lead?**

**Other Sources**



**View Career Video**

## Job Overview

Couriers and Messengers pick up and carry messages, documents, packages, and other items between offices or departments within a firm or to other businesses. They travel by foot, bicycle, motorcycle, automobile, or public transportation. Couriers who drive trucks are described in the Light Truck Drivers profile in this report.

Most Couriers and Messengers deliver items within a limited geographic area, such as a city or metropolitan area. Often they will deliver items that the sender is unwilling to entrust to other means of delivery, such as important legal or financial documents, passports, airline tickets, or medical samples to be tested.

Couriers and Messengers receive their instructions either in person—by reporting to an office—or by telephone, cell phone, two-way radio, fax, or e-mail. Then they pick up the item and carry it to its destination.

After each pickup or delivery, Couriers and Messengers check in with their dispatcher to receive instructions. Sometimes the dispatcher will contact them while they are on the road and add or cancel deliveries as the need arises. Consequently, most Couriers and Messengers spend much of their time outdoors or in their vehicles. They usually maintain records of deliveries and often obtain signatures from the persons receiving the items.

## Typical Tasks

- ➔ Walk, ride bicycles, drive vehicles, or use public transportation in order to reach destinations to deliver messages or materials.
- ➔ Load vehicles with listed goods, ensuring goods are loaded correctly and taking precautions with hazardous goods.
- ➔ Unload and sort items collected along delivery routes.
- ➔ Receive messages or materials to be delivered, and information on recipients, such as names, addresses, telephone numbers, and delivery instructions, communicated via telephone, two-way radio, or in person.
- ➔ Plan and follow the most efficient routes for delivering goods.

# Couriers and Messengers

- ➔ Deliver messages and items, such as newspapers, documents, and packages, between establishment departments, and to other establishments and private homes.
- ➔ Sort items to be delivered according to the delivery route.

*Detailed descriptions of this occupation may be found in the Occupational Information Network (O\*NET) at [online.onetcenter.org](http://online.onetcenter.org).*

## Important Skills, Knowledge, and Abilities

- ➔ Reading Comprehension — Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work-related documents.
- ➔ Coordination — Adjusting actions in relation to others' actions.
- ➔ Active Listening — Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
- ➔ Transportation — Knowledge of principles and methods for moving people or goods by air, rail, sea, or road, including the relative costs and benefits.
- ➔ Customer and Personal Service — Knowledge of principles and processes for providing customer and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction.
- ➔ Oral Expression — The ability to communicate information and ideas in speaking so others will understand.
- ➔ Multilimb Coordination — The ability to coordinate two or more limbs (for example, two arms, two legs, or one leg and one arm) while sitting, standing, or lying down. It does not involve performing the activities while the whole body is in motion.

## Work Environment

Couriers and Messengers spend most of their time alone, making deliveries, and usually are not closely supervised. Those who deliver by bicycle must be physically fit and are exposed to all weather conditions, as well as to the many hazards associated with heavy traffic. Car, van, and truck Couriers must sometimes carry heavy loads, either manually or with the aid of a hand truck. They also deal with difficult parking situations, as well as traffic jams and road construction. The pressure of making as many deliveries as possible to increase one's earnings can be stressful and may lead to unsafe driving or bicycling practices. The typical workweek is Monday through Friday; however, evening and weekend hours are common.

Couriers and Messengers who work in hospitals, government, or for large corporations are sometimes represented by unions such as the Service Employees International Union. Others join groups such as the San Francisco Bike Messenger Association to work toward better working conditions.

# Couriers and Messengers

## California's Job Outlook and Wages

The California Outlook and Wage table below represents the occupation across all industries. Approximately 7 percent of Couriers and Messengers working in California are self-employed.

| Standard Occupational Classification | Estimated Number of Workers 2004 | Estimated Number of Workers 2014 | Average Annual Openings | 2006 Wage Range (per hour) |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| Couriers and Messengers              |                                  |                                  |                         |                            |
| 43-5021                              | 18,400                           | 16,800                           | 420                     | \$8.13 to \$12.22          |

*Wages do not reflect self-employment.*

*Average annual openings include new jobs plus net replacements.*

*Source: [www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov](http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov), Employment Projections by Occupation and OES Employment & Wages by Occupation, Labor Market Information Division, Employment Development Department.*

## Trends

The need to replace Couriers and Messengers who leave for other kinds of jobs or retirement is expected to create over 4,000 job opportunities between 2004 and 2014. However, no new growth in the occupation is expected, largely due to the widespread use of electronic information-handling technologies such as e-mail and fax.

## Training/Requirements/Apprenticeships

Most jobs as Couriers and Messengers do not require more than a high school diploma. Some employers require a valid California driver license, drug testing, and background checks. Generally, it takes less than 30 days of on-the-job training to learn the required tasks for this position.

### Recommended High School Course Work

High school courses in language arts, general business, business mathematics, and computer technology are helpful.

## Where Do I Find the Job?

Direct application to employers remains one of the most effective job search methods.

Use the *Search for Employers by Industry* feature on the *Career Center* page at [www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov](http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov) to locate employers in your area. Search under the following industry names to get a list of private firms and their addresses:

- Couriers
- Diagnostic Imaging Centers
- Freight Transportation Arrangement
- General Medical and Surgical Hospitals
- Local Messengers and Local Delivery
- Medical Laboratories
- Offices of Bank Holding Companies
- Offices of Lawyers
- Other Hospitals
- Psychiatric and Substance Abuse Hospitals

# Couriers and Messengers

Search these **yellow page** headings for listings of private firms:

- ➡ Delivery Service
- ➡ Hospitals
- ➡ Messenger Service

## *Where Can the Job Lead?*

Couriers and Messengers, especially those who work for courier or messenger services, have limited advancement opportunities; a few move into the office to learn dispatching or to take service requests by phone.

### **Related Occupations**

Postal Service Workers (See Logistics Profile)  
Truck Drivers, Light or Delivery Services (See Logistics Profile)  
Shipping, Receiving, and Traffic Clerks (See Logistics Profile)  
Cargo and Freight Agents (See Logistics Profile)

## *Other Sources*

California Association of Regional Occupational Centers and Programs  
[www.carocp.org](http://www.carocp.org)

Messenger Courier Association of the Americas  
[www.mcaa.com](http://www.mcaa.com)

San Francisco Bike Messenger Association  
[www.ahalenia.com/sfbma](http://www.ahalenia.com/sfbma)